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ABSTRACT

This collection contains 21 brief stories told by members of the Fort Belknap (Montana) American Indian community. These tales of the Assiniboine, Sioux, and Gros Ventres include legends, ghost stories, and reminiscences of heroic deeds, traditional life, and unusual events. Recollections of the past contain descriptions of the daily life of the Gros Ventres, traditional religious practices, dances, hunting, the annual fair in Hays, Montana, wild horse roundups, the Civilian Conservation Corps and WPA projects during the 1930s, and the forced removal of Indian children to boarding school by the police. Numerous pen and ink drawings illustrate the text. (SV)

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# CAMPFIRE STORIES

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## OF THE

# FORT BELKNAP COMMUNITY

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# Gros Ventre Legend

When Earthmaker got finished with man and woman and everything else, they were all sitting around talking. So Earthmaker asked them, "How do you want it? Shall you die and stay dead, or shall you live again?"

The man picked up a buffalo chip and threw it into the water. It sank, then came back up. "Like that," said man, "we die and then come back to life."

The Bear did not agree. He threw a rock into the water and said, "No. The Earth would soon be too full. We will be happier if we die and new generations came."

The rock never came back to the surface. Earthmaker said, "That it is, like the rock it shall be."

*Minerva Allen*

# The Old Lady

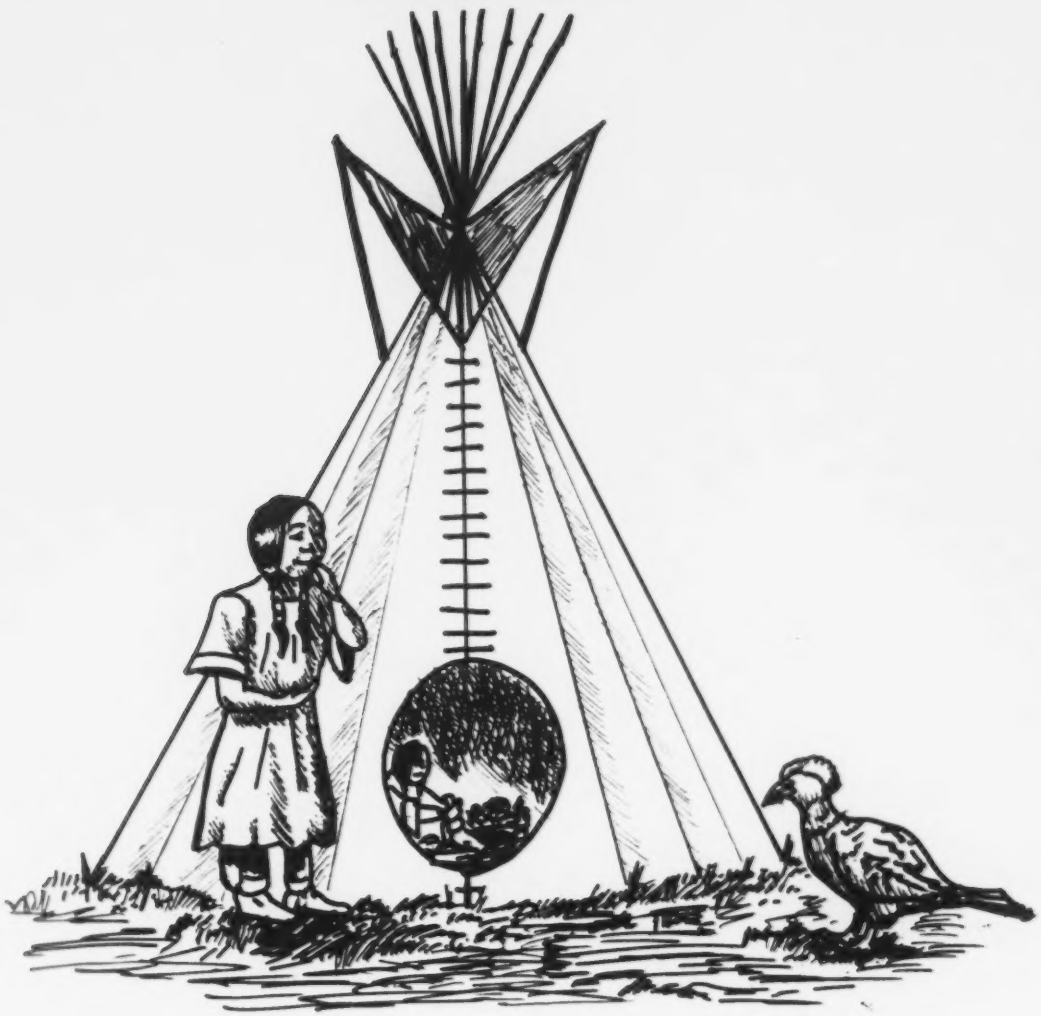
**One time when I was out riding a friend came and asked if he could use my horse. As we were quite a way from home I gave him permission to use my horse and I caught a ride home with someone else. My friend was drinking but I loaned him anyway.**

**This is what my friend told me after we got back home. He said as he was on his way down from the Mission area, near a bend in the road, he was walking the horse along when the horse started to snort and prance around, finally stopping completely and wouldn't go on. He kept trying to make the horse go but it just wouldn't and it kept snorting and bucking around. Finally he said he stopped and he got off to look around. Not far in front of him was an old lady sitting in the barrow pit. He got back on his horse and went up the road a ways and fixed a smoke — just sitting there waiting. Finally the horse quietened down and quit making noise so he started out again. When he got to the place where the old lady was, there wasn't anyone there. No sign of the old lady anywhere. The horse just made a snorting sound and rolled his eyes toward the barrow pit.**

**My friend was kind of drunk he said when he started out, but he sure sobered up in a hurry after he saw that, and brought the horse straight home.**

***Told By: Frank Cuts The Rope***

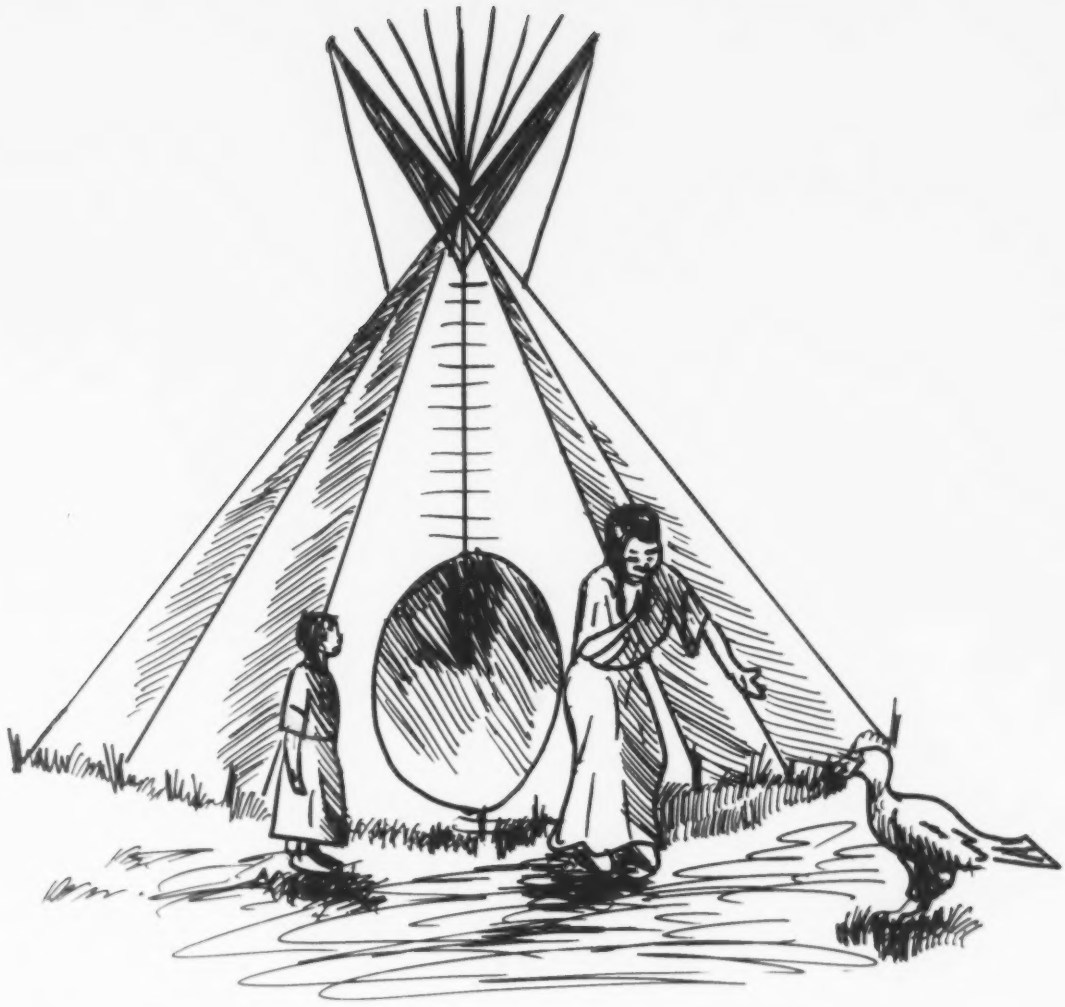
# Strange Bird



When I was a small child, I used to stay with my grandmother in her lodge. When she was making pemmican one time I went outside. While outside I saw a strange bird. It was red and had a comb on like a rooster, this was red, too. It was looking at me so I watched it for awhile.

I went in the lodge and told my grandmother, "There's a funny looking bird outside, it's all red and it's really big." So she went outside to see.

She started praying to this bird. She asked it for long life for her and me. After she got through praying, the bird flew away.



Sure enough she lived to be 104 years old. She had good eyesight, hearing, and all of her teeth. The teeth were worn down to the gums. Her memory wasn't very good.

In 1925 she got lost and froze to death.

# Real Spirits?

Years ago there was no drinking on the reservation; that is, you couldn't buy it here. Lots of people used to go to a near-by town called Landusky for their "Saturday evening's fun." One time two young men were on their way home after one such evening out. They came over the mountain past Mission Peak and on down through the canyon. Before they started out, they were asked by three girls if they'd give them a ride back home to Hays. They came home over the hill as they used to say back then when they came home by way of the canyon.

When they passed the Natural Bridge area the girls asked why they didn't stop and pick up those two guys they passed. So they stopped and went back to where these guys were supposed to be. One guy got up close to these men. He said they had on big black hats, blankets wrapped around them, and they were just sitting there rocking back and forth. The other guy came closer to them too and said he couldn't see their faces. As he was looking the first man got scared and ran back to the pickup and started going. Meanwhile, the second man noticed these men sitting didn't have faces. He got scared and took off running after the pickup. He said the pickup was going pretty fast but he caught up to it and jumped on in the back. They all were so scared they actually saw these men sitting there with no faces. The first people they came to they stopped to tell them about these men. They all decided to go back up the canyon to check on what they had seen. The time it took them to leave the canyon, tell these people, and go back up was so short, one of the men said about five minutes.

After they got back up the canyon they couldn't see these men anywhere. They looked up and down the canyon and said there was no way they could get out of the canyon but still they didn't find these men. To this day this one man who saw them wonders what he saw and if they were real.

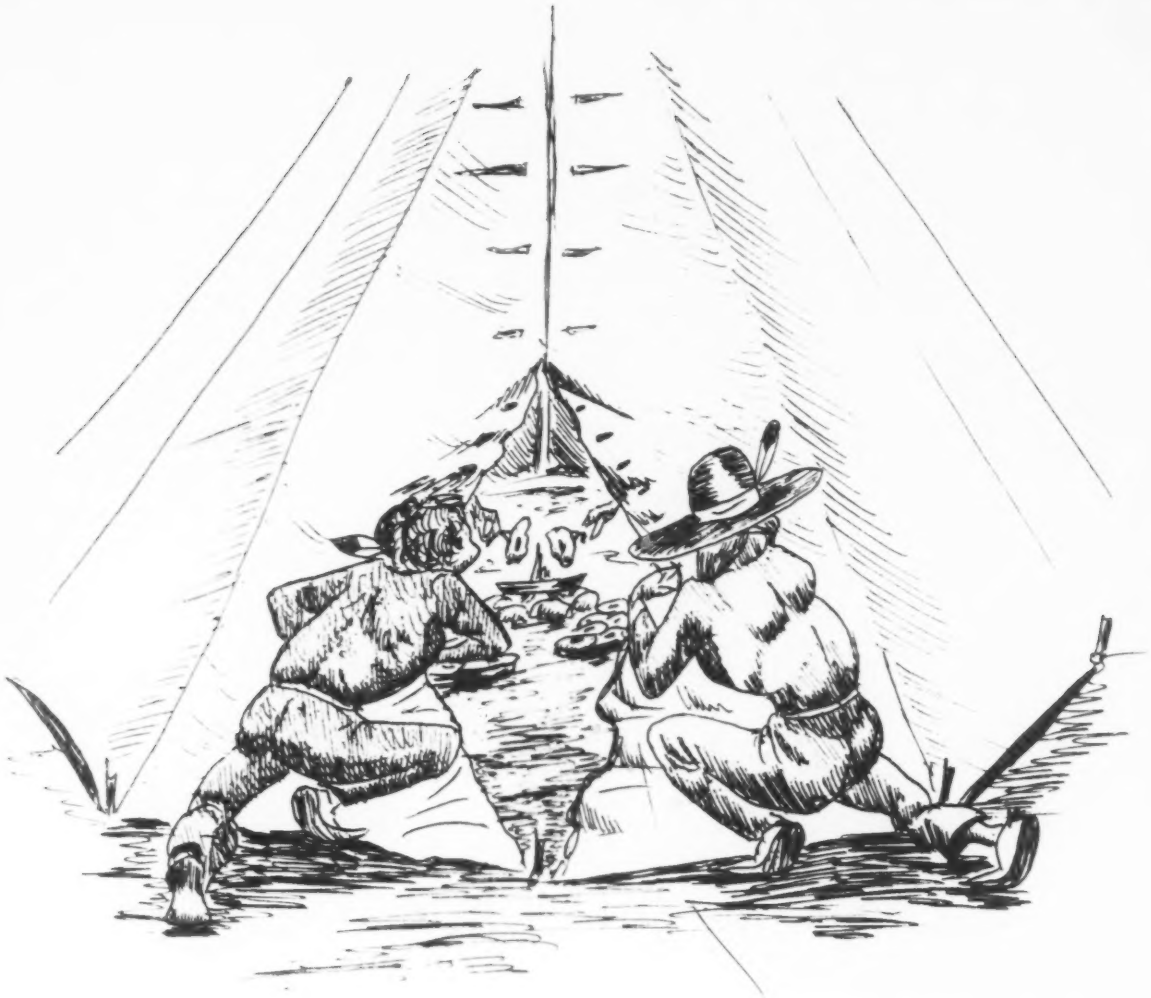
What do you think? Would you think they were real SPIRITS?

*Written by: Camie Doney*
*Told By: The Artist of the Bilingual Program*

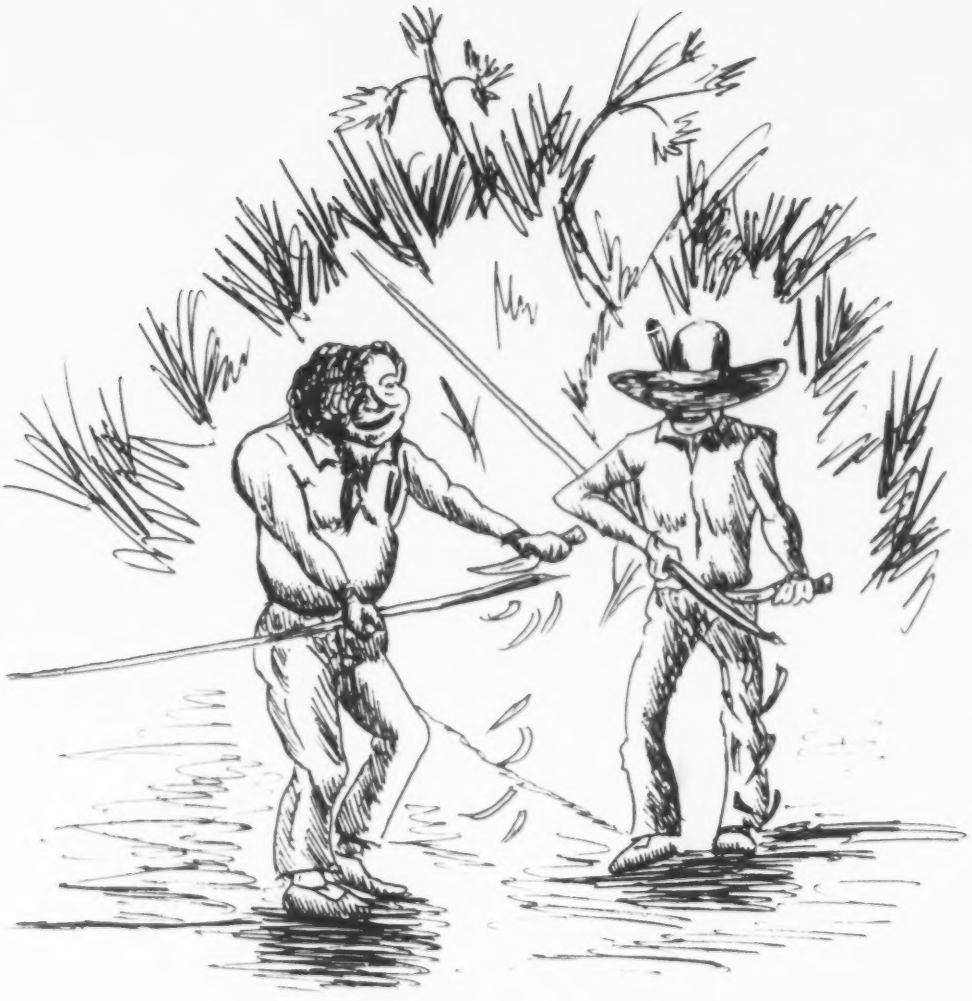
# Tricky

Once there were two old men. They were tricky old men.

There were two old ladies that had a lodge. They had a fire in the middle of this lodge. They were cooking and making fry bread.



The two old men came and were watching them.



Pretty soon the men got
sticks and sharpened them.

Each time the ladies put fry bread on their plate these men would take them. There was hardly any bread left.

Then the women started to blame each other. "You're eating my bread as soon as I put it in the plate," said one. The other answered, "You're the one. You're taking all of it, I didn't take any."

The men were standing there laughing.
Soon the women started to fight.

Then the women heard the men laughing and they went outside. The men ran away laughing but the women didn't know who the men were.

One of the men was Curly Head and the other was Eagle Child. Eagle Child in Gros Ventre means "Tricky Child." Since he was tricky he was so named.

## Crazy Dog

Long time ago the Indians here used to have their dances in their homes. They never had big halls or gyms like they do now. Anybody who wanted to dance would come to these homes where they were held.

Usually no little children or younger people were allowed to attend these dances, they were held for adults.

At one house dance a young man wanted to play a trick on the people. He had something that he gave to a dog to make it act crazy. Then he pushed the dog into the house.

The dog went crazy running all directions in the house. The people got scared and were running all over, too, to get out of the dogs way; they climbed on tables and tried to climb cupboards and the walls. Some ran outside.

One woman screamed at the crowd, "He isn't going to hurt you! He isn't going to hurt you!" She was the one who tried to climb the cupboard.

One guy was passing out soup and stepped into a bucket and couldn't get his feet out. He was hopping around on one foot with his soup, trying to stay out of this dog's way.

# Two Friends

A long time ago there were two old men who were good friends and kind of looked out for each other. They'd sit and visit, and on one occasion one of the men told the other how he'd like to be buried when he died. When he died his plans were carried out. He wanted to be just set in his chair where he liked in his cabin. I think he was handicapped in some way. Anyway, he had this favorite chair he wanted to be left in. So when he died his friend went to the cabin every day to pray and take care of this old man. He would visit his friend, talk to him as if he were alive.

It so happened one day that a sheepherder on his way home from a job decided to rest and get out of the sun. He saw this cabin so he thought he'd go in and sleep for awhile. I guess he didn't see this corpse sitting there or he didn't care, so he fell asleep behind it anyway. While this sheepherder was sleeping this other old man was coming over to do his praying of visiting.

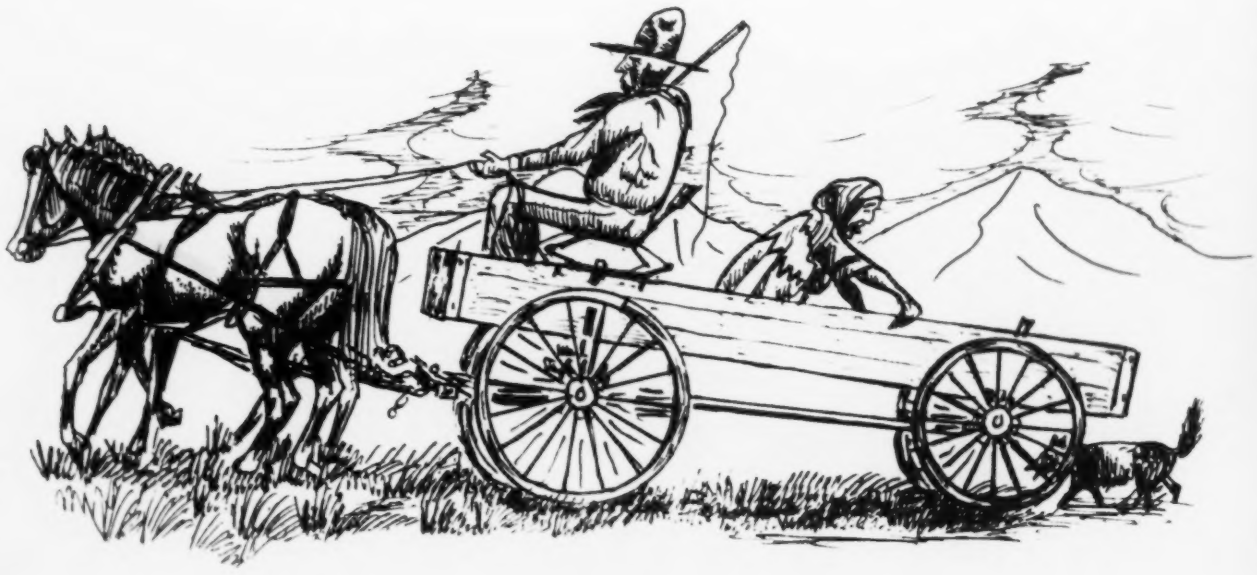
As he came in he greeted the corpse in his usual way, "Wa hey," and proceeded to talk to him. This sheepherder woke up and heard the old man say his greeting, so he answered him. This scared the old man; he just ran out and forgot about his friend. I don't know if he ever went back. He must have thought the corpse really answered him.

*Told By: Frank Cuts The Rope*

# Switching Wheels

At a house dance some young boys decided to play a trick on an older couple by changing their wagon wheels around.

On these wagons the front wheels were usually smaller than the back, and these boys put the large wheels in front. The old folks never noticed the wheels when they climbed in to go home.



The old lady sat in back and was thinking they were climbing a hill. She said, "When are we going to stop climbing this hill?"

**Tanning hide**

**Hunting wild game**

# Making dry meat

**Pounding berries**

# The Great Antelope Chase

I will try to tell this true story as it was told to me by two men. I will write about Old Wounded Foot and Cloud, both of whom I personally knew when I was a young man. These men were both Assiniboine. Cloud lived at Chicken Hill and Wounded Foot lived west of Frazier, both on the Fort Peck Reservation.

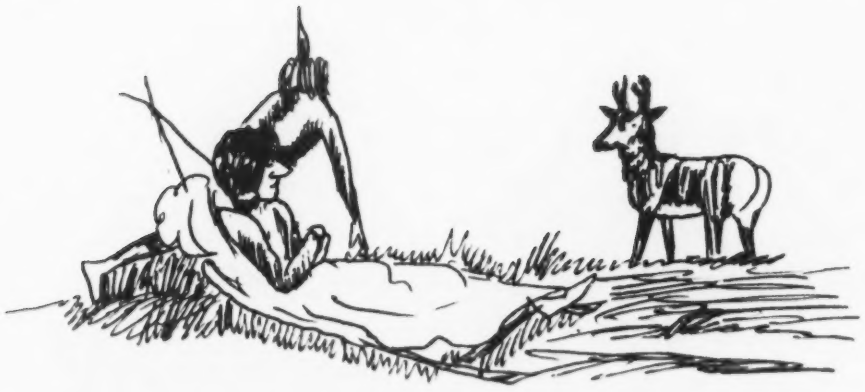
Wounded Foot gave me the whole story and I clearly remember every bit of what he told me. I asked Cloud about the incident but found he wasn't much for boasting. He would only tell me a little of the highlights.

Wounded Foot was Cloud's father-in-law. They had come westward to the Larb Hills to get a big supply of what the Assiniboines call abuy-ayousa. They mixed it with a rough cut brand of tobacco for their pipe smoking.

They were caught off guard by a small band of Crow Indians, perhaps out scouting for horses to take home. A shoot-out started, and Wounded Foot and Cloud did manage to hold them off until night fall. Then the Crows disappeared. Wounded Foot was wounded in the right shin or near the ankle that rendered him crippled to the day of his death. This all happened quite late in the fall, as near as I can remember.

***There was an encounter with the Crows in which Wounded Foot was wounded in the right foot***

Cloud was a tall 6 foot 5 inches, straight as a fiddle string. He was powerful and deep-chested. He was about 75 or 80 years old in 1930. So this shoot-out took place, it must have been about 1860, as near as I can remember. There wasn't much left for Cloud to do but rig up a travois type of deal and start east with his father-in-law. After a night of nursing and travel, infection set in the wound, plus a high fever.



One early morning after an all-night travel they spotted an antelope. Old Wounded Foot said, "Ah, if only I had the fresh kidney of that antelope to eat I believe I would live through all this pain. Cloud said, "Father-in-law, you shall eat that antelope kidney before that sun goes down." Then he let the travois down and took the blanket he had on for warmth and covered his father-in-law. He stripped down to his britch cloth, tying a red cloth around his head to keep the sweat from his eyes. He took his razor-sharp knife, jogged to a large sagebrush and chewed a large handful of sage leaves, blowing them in his cupped hands and rubbing it on the calves of his legs, his chest and his forehead. Then he started on a pretty good gait after the antelope.

The antelope had stood a short distance watching the approaching man, then took off running at top speed, as the antelope would run into a circle. Cloud would cut across; this went on for the greater part of the day, with no let up from the man.

When the sun reached about three quarters of the day, the antelope showed signs of tiring. Cloud kept up the same speed, not giving the antelope a chance to hide. Then he laid down and rested as the remainder of the day wore on. Cloud could see that he was gaining on his prey. He looked up and thanked the Great Spirit for giving him strength and courage for keeping up the chase.

As the sun started to sink in the west, he was within a few short yards of the antelope. He put on a great burst of speed and came in striking distance. By now the antelope's tongue was hanging out; it could hardly run anymore. Cloud ran up along side of his prey and sank his knife into the soft part of the side, just ahead of the hip bone. He had his prey. Now his father-in-law would have his wish for raw kidney fulfilled.

*The Antelope showed signs of tiring*

As the chase went on, he had made a big circle, so he didn't have too far to drag the antelope to where his father-in-law was lying waiting. When Cloud returned from dragging in the antelope, his father-in-law was so happy, he showed signs of improvement after eating the raw kidney. After they ate, they both fell asleep.

The next morning Cloud harnessed himself to the travois and moved his father-in-law to a wooded coulee. There was also good spring water flowing out of the bowels of mother earth. A short distance away lay the carcass of a buffalo that had somehow met his end of freely roaming the prairies. Its insides had all been eaten out by wolves and coyotes. The skin was still intact, making a good hideout, as well as a good shelter from the cold north winds and storms.

Wounded Foot said to Cloud, "Now that my wishes for kidney and fresh meat have been fulfilled, I want you to go home and tell our people that I will sleep in the buffalo carcass through the day so no enemy can see me. When I run out of meat, I will crawl out and snare cottontail rabbits until it's time when the Great Spirit calls me to go join my loved ones at the Happy Hunting Grounds." With that, they shook hands and parted.

Cloud hit the Missouri River close by, following the thick timber down for several days until he reached what is now Frazier, Montana. He walked to the large encampment of the Red Bottoms (Assiniboine People). He sadly broke the bad news to his people. Unknowning of the future outcome of the beloved Wounded Foot, they mourned his passing with offering and prayers over the peace pipe, that he will have a safe journey to the land of the Happy Hunting Ground.

When Spring finally came, the raging Missouri River belched up from under the frozen river, breaking up the ice and jamming it and gorging it on down the river, until the river was clear of all the ice and started flowing back to normal. By this time Wounded Foot had survived the painful ordeal with the help and faithful blessings of the Great Spirit. He lived on snared cottontail rabbits and occasional porcupine. He came through in fine shape, only for that wounded leg which prevented him from walking.

He fashioned himself a pair of crutches and hobbled on down to the river. He built a raft out of driftwood, tightening it together using water willows. He then loaded what few suggans he had and mounted on his raft and shoved on down the winding Old Missouri. It was a long, exciting journey, seeing all the animals as they came to the river: wild horses, beavers, and many other walks of animal life.

*Wounded Foot's return to the reservation*

After many days and nights afloat he finally reached his destination. Disembarking from his raft he set a few rabbit snares. In a very short time, he had a couple of cottontail rabbits, and had a good meal of roasted rabbit. Then he slowly crutched himself northward to the Red Bottoms settlement. He arrived at the encampment late in the evening, causing one heck of a commotion, as everyone thought he was dead and long gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds. That could only be his ghost! It took quite some time for the big stampede to stop, and realize that it was really a man of flesh and blood.

Now as I said before, I was personally acquainted with both these old men, who have been long gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds. I never did really know the real Indian given name of Wounded Foot. I just assumed he acquired this name after being wounded in the lower portion of his leg. He was always eager to tell me the story of the incredible feat that his son-in-law had accomplished in the big antelope chase. On the other hand, Cloud never had much to say about the chase. Each time I would ask him, he would only say, "Yes, my grandchild, that did happen. People made a big deal out of it, but I think the antelope was wounded, or it may have been sick." Cloud rode and trailed his little bunch of horses to the Missouri River each day to water them.

I guessed for him to be in his early 90's. Wounded Foot passed away in the late 20's and Cloud passed away about 1934. As near as my memory serves me, there are a few around yet who remember Old Cloud.

The End.

# Power

*Prayer and fasting*

This is a story of POWER as told to us by Theresa Lamebull.

This story is about how the old Indians got their power to be great warriors or medicine men to doctor the sick people, or to find lost or stolen items.

They had to have a dream first. They went to the mountain they had dreamed of. They had to have this dream first before they could go; they couldn't just go on their own. They'd go to this mountain they dreamed of to fast, pray, and cry. They'd do this for four days and nights or sometimes even a week, until they learned what they went for. Even a few women did this.

Some old man had to take the women up the mountain. They couldn't go alone. This old man had to fast, pray, and cry with the women. Both of the people had to make an offering, such as their own flesh or an offering of something else. Then the man would leave the woman alone. This was for her to finish praying or whatever else she had to do.

They really went through some suffering and hard times. They did great penance, praying, crying, and fasting, and offering all this up to the Great Spirit. They asked for any kind of power and earned it the hard way. When they were heard by the Great Spirit or Being in some form of an animal or an old man (mostly an old man would appear to them) they would get their power.

So this is how the Indians got their power. They did not make their own power. They did not get their power without going through the fasting, praying, and crying. They had to do a lot of suffering. They had to have this dream. Something had to tell them to go to a certain place and stay until they got what they asked for.

# Changing Times

A long time ago the Gros Ventres used horses with travois to travel. I rode in one with my grandmother. She'd ride in one with a two-headed saddle she made out of wood. She covered it with rawhide of buffalo, and then later on it was covered with deer or antelope hide as were most others made like it. Sometimes they used cowhide to cover them. All they had to use in those days was horse and buggy or wagons pulled by team.

Later on they started to make cars but very few people had one. Now almost everybody has one and you never see buggies or wagons anymore. Very few horses are left, and also very few people own cows. Long ago these were plentiful. People used to raise chickens and other farm fowl right along with the cows and horses.

People even used to raise their own gardens so they would have food for the winter. They knew how to prepare everything to preserve it for the winter. They picked all the edible berries and prepared them for the winter. Berries picked were: juneberries, chokecherries, gooseberries, bullberries, and currants. They dried them for winter use and later on they canned them. Meat was prepared and dried to keep for a long time. They had dry meat and prepared some for what is known as pemmican. Now people can or just freeze a lot of this. As we didn't have freezers long ago, we had to work hard to prepare for winter in preserving our foods. In the old days we kept our food in something we called ice boxes.

*Preparation for the winter months*

After the tipis, our people lived in one-room log houses called cabins. The Indians built these themselves and raised their families in these and even those with large families used these one-room cabins. We had to haul our water for household use. It was carried in pails or buckets from a spring or streams. When it was time to wash the clothes they hauled it up to the house to fill tubs.

This was heated over fire pits. They made many trips back and forth from the creek to the house to fill the tubs with what they needed to wash. Before they had tubs the women used to wash in the streams or rivers. They made sure they camped near these. They had wash-boards.These were boards put together with the center made of heavy corrugated tin. Before these the women just used rocks.

They didn't have electricity in the old days. I guess they went to bed before dark. Later they had kerosene lamps to use. We had no inside bathrooms. They made toilets out of lumber to set up outside. People sure have it easy now or in these modern times. Not like it was in my time. We worked hard and had it hard for everything we did.

*Story told by: Theresa Lamebull*

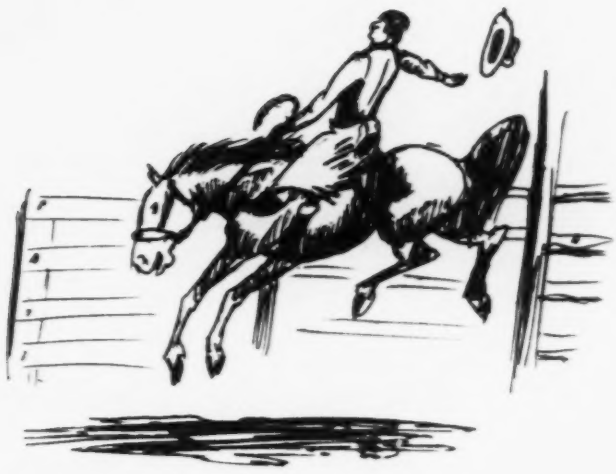
# Hays Fairs

A long time ago they used to have fairs here in Hays. They had everything you could think of at that time. Side shows, carnivals, boxing, horse racing and parades. They even had two ferris wheels set up, one large and one small. Also some pilot would bring his plane and give people rides. He charged so much per pound. They had this for about 4 years.

One old man, named Peter Stiffarm, started these fairs and then everybody pitched in and helped make it a success. These fairs started about 1914 and would be held in August. They ended about 1934.

People came from all over to enjoy the fair. They camped in their tipis for as long as the fair lasted, which was one week exactly. Early in the morning a camp crier would go around making the day's announcements. He would be all dressed up in his Indian dress, a beaded buckskin suit, and his horse would be attired in beadwork.

In the afternoons, after dinner (lunch), the people would have a parade. Some rode their horses, others walked, they were all attired in Indian dress. After the parade a rodeo was held.



After the rodeo everybody went back to their camps to cook supper for themselves. In the evenings people got ready for the Indian dances or the "White" dances. The Indian dancing was held in a big round tent and the other was held on a place built with boards, a platform type with walls.

Everybody used to join in and participate in all activities. No one was mean or wanting to fight, even though some of the people did drink, they kept to themselves and didn't bother anybody. People had respect for each other and each other's properties. Everybody had fun and really enjoyed the programs. I never once thought the Hays Fair would ever end.

*Told By: Theresa Lamebull*

# Wild Horses

Years ago there were a lot of wild horses, especially down around Three Buttes and Wild Horse Butte. There were about two or three thousand head, as they kept increasing. There were no fences anywhere. It was all open range.

One day the Government decided to round up all the wild horses. They all gathered together for the roundup. It took them a month to round them up and get them ready to ship them back east for canning. Then the Government started to build fences out on the range.

# Work

Jobs were very scarce. The men did a lot of hunting to provide for their families. Later on there were a few jobs for those lucky enough to get them.

In the early Thirties they had the C.C.C. days (Civilian Conservation Corps). This program provided work for a lot of the people. The people came from all over, this reservation (Fort Belknap) plus other reservations, and a lot of white men came to work here too. Wages were about $40.00 per month for real hard labor. These were the first paying jobs for this reservation.

Later on they had the W.P.A. program. Both these programs provided work such as building dams, reservoirs, and other conservational purposes; also building a lot of the buildings that we use on the reservation. One building that they made then that still stands today and is sometimes used is the old Community Hall at Lodge Pole. Wages for the W.P.A. program were $45.00 per month.

*C.C.C. and W.P.A. work*

**These Stories Are Dedicated To My Wife, Lillian Cantrell**

**Written By: Wallace Cantrell**
**Edited By: Jeannie Campbell**
**Illustrated By: Frank Cuts The Rope**

# The Gathering of the Stock

I was riding towards Oswego one evening, going after a few sacks of bull durham. I made my usual stop at my old friend Jim Cody's place for a short chat and the usual shot of moonshine, plus a good cup of strong coffee. When I rode up, Jim, his wife, and the two boys, Dick, age 14, and Bob, age 11, were busy as bees. They were loading up the buck board for a hurry-up horse round-up of the stock. He said, "I just got to get up north before the Government round-up gets out there, or I'll have to pay $5.00 a head to get them out of hock from that darn Indian agent they call Eggers.

"I'll beat them to the job. The first crack of daylight I'll have Thunder and Lightning hooked to the buck board with Nellie at the ribbons and the trip ropes tucked in her belt, headed north for Todd Lakes, Three Buttes, Tomato Can, and Jack Norris's Coulee, then on down to the Little Porcupine. We should have the job pretty well sewed up by then.

"I've got two of the most riding, toughest circle riders on this reservation, and I got just the saddle horses to do it with. Why, Old Road Gobbler and Sun To Sun will go all day; when the sun sets they will climb to the highest peak, looking for more ground. I'l mount Dick on Old Road Gobbler and mount Bob on Sun To Sun, and of course I'll be a-straddled on Old Many Miles, with Old Betsy across my lap. There is no way those government horse thieves can ever break the outfit." So at daylight the big Cody round-up got on its way.

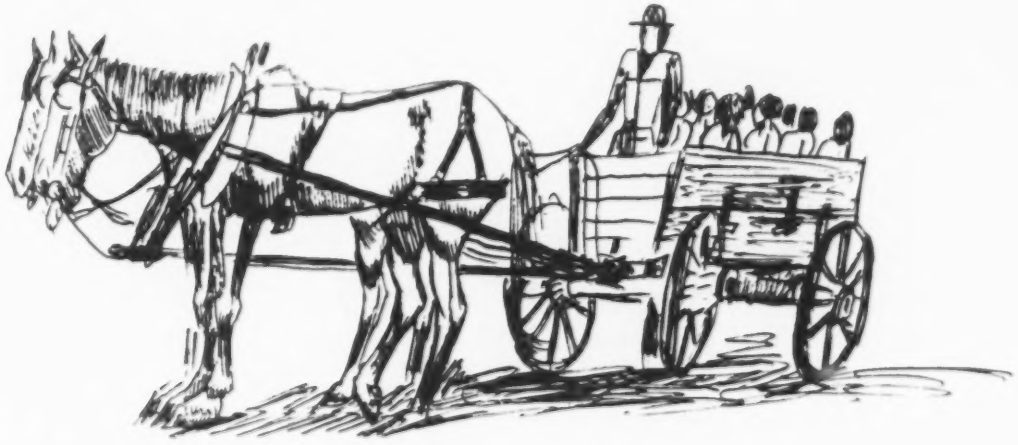
The ground Jim planned on covering was at least one hundred and seventy five miles (175), by the way the crow flies. No way can Jim make that circle, let alone gather a bunch of wild horses mixed in with other horses. If you knew Jim as I knew him, you would hear a lot of hard-to-beat stories, but then it all made good listening over a good hot cup of coffee. Jim always had a good story in reserve, like riding Man of War in the Kentucky Derby. You would really have to meet and get acquainted with Jim to really appreciate the old boy.

*Story told by: Wally Cantrell*

# Why We Have So Many Ex-Presidents On the Fort Peck Reservation

I will tell this story as it was told to me. I personally knew most of these men.

Along about 1885 to 1900 the Indian agent would have to get his Indian police out, to round up all the school age children. Some of the parents would also load them up in their camp wagons and head for the hills, as they couldn't stand to have their children out in the boarding schools for nine month terms. So the police would round up the children and load them up in a prairie schooner type wagon and take them to the Poplar boarding school. They de-loused them and dressed them up civilized, and then they started learning the white man's way of living, which most of the parents and children resented.



*The police rounded up the kids and loaded them in a wagon.*

A large bunch of boys were hauled in from the west half of the reservation, which is the Assiniboine side, and a large bunch from the east side, which was and still is the Sioux side. As the boys all huddled in bunches waiting for a chance to make a break for what they thought would be freedom, a big boy came by and told the boys if they didn't tell their names they would be set free and could return home. So when they were all herded into a large holding room and each was asked what his name was, none would reveal his true name. After a long attempt by the school superintendent, he could see that he wasn't getting any place by asking them their names. So he locked the door.

***The priest gave the boys all past presidents' names***

He then started looking for the priest. When he found him he had a long talk with him, and finally they came up with the idea of giving each boy a name for school registration.

So the priest and the superintendent went back to the holding room. The priest spoke to the boys, saying "I'm going to give each one of you boys a name, a name you will never be ashamed of." So he started naming the boys.

"I'll name you James Garfield." Another was John Adams, and another was John Quincy Adams, Stonewall Jackson, Thomas Hancock, Grover Cleveland, Jeff Davis, George Washington, Nathan Hale, Abraham Lincoln, Joe Robinson. After using up the presidents' names, he just hung any name he could think of.

That is how we have such names on our reservation. However, there are a few that do carry their given names, such as Afraid of His Track, Horse's Ghost, and a number of others.

So now this should put you straight on how we came to have so many ex-presidents on the Fort Peck Reservation.

*Story by: Wally Cantrell*

# A Prayer To a Father-In-Law

This story is an actual happening; this happened back in the early 1920's. In the little community of Chicken Hill some five miles west of Wolf Point, the Mormons, Latter Day Saints, were granted a 40 acre tract to set up a church and a school. Back in those days the Mormon missionaries traveled on foot, going from house to house teaching the word of God and helping out wherever help was needed, as did Christ back in His day here on earth.

In so doing the Mormon elders converted a number of Indians and to this day there are a lot of L.D.S. members, I for one. Although in those days all good Indians prayed to the Great Spirit asking his blessings. The Mormon teaching was along the same line as the Indian beliefs, only to the white God there was no peace pipe offering.

*The Mormon elders converted a lot of the Indians*

The Mormon elders would always stop to visit at Grandpa and Grandma Crooket's and eat dinner, or whatever time of the day they arrived, a meal was always served. Grandma Crooket would pray in our Native Assiniboine tongue. She would say, "Our Father in Heaven." Grandpa Crooket would never pray the white man way, but would just sit silent. Until one day Grandma said to Grandpa, "Why don't you say grace once in a while."

So he agreed; they bowed their heads and Grandpa started his prayer. "Oh, my father-in-law, as you roast up in the clouds you must be a great man because your daughter always says a short story, my dear father in the clouds. So I ask you to breathe upon this food and from it we have good health and success. Oh, father-in-law, your daughter has so much faith in you, we will just leave everything up to you."

Suddenly Grandma realized what he was saying, so she nudged him and said, "Who are you praying to?"

"I'm praying to my father-in-law. You always say 'my father up in the clouds,' so he has to be my father-in-law."

*Story told by: Wally Cantrell*

***I'm praying to my Father-in-law***

*The spring roundup was about to start*

# A Cowboy's Way of De-Lousing

This story dates back to the year 1928. The spring round-up was about to start. All the horse owners and their rough riding hands were to meet and start out on the yearly event. My friend Frank Dumont and I were among the gang; as usual, Shorty LaWatty was the cook, and a cook he was.

The outfit got started and we started gathering from all sides of the reservation. It wasn't long until the herd got large. We all had to take turns standing guard for two hours. We pretty well had the whole north country worked out. We wound up at the little town of Oswego, as at that time Oswego was the largest shipping point in the country; shipping went on and on.

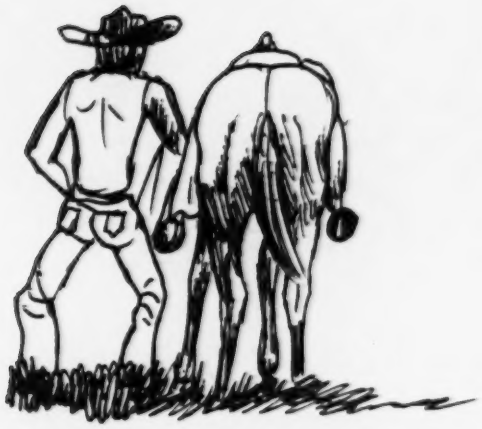
Our boss Ray Mitchell had Frank, Louie Adams, and I move his bunch up to the forked Little Wolf Creek north of Wolf Point, Montana. Frank and I stayed with the herd, and Louie left to take a job up on the Cotton Wood Ranch for Harry McCloud, a large horse rancher and very well known.

*I can't say how my pardner Frank got himself all loused up*

I can't say as to how Frank got himself all loused up, but he sure had a heck of a bunch. One warm day we were holding the large day herd, me on one side and Frank on the far north side. I could see Frank; he got off his horse and was fooling around for a long time. When he finally mounted up and started riding his end of the herd again, I could see that he had no clothes on, except his hat and boots. He had taken all his clothing off, and spread each piece out over a bunch of large piss ant hills. He was de-lousing his clothes; and I mean those ants did a real job, even down to the nits that had been carefully layed in the seams like a chick incubator. Frank was giving his de-lousers plenty of time to do a good job.

*All he had on was his hat and boots — those ants really did a job on those nits and lice*

*The wild horse stampede — Frank didn't have time to put his clothes on*



***He walked around loop-legged for some time***

Suddenly Ray and his wife Lucy popped over the hill in their litle red Model T Ford bug. In so doing they caused one heck of a wild horse stampede. It took some hard and fast riding to hold the herd together. My friend Frank, of course, didn't have time to get his clothes, much less put them on. Frank put in nearly all day riding in the nude. Well, I wouldn't say he was completely nude; he did have his hat, boots, and spurs on. He did turn to a little darker shade by late afternoon from the old hot hay-maker beating down on him nearly all day. There wasn't much in the way of skin left on the inside of his nice long shaped legs. His fancy flower-stamped saddle was kind of hard on pant and chapless legs; he walked around loop-legged for a few days. He said, "Wally, I went through a heck of a deal, but it was sure as heck worth it to get rid of all them darn pesky gray-backs and their babies (lice and nits).

*Story by: Wally Cantrell*

# The Fake Hanging

*Story told by: Wally Cantrell*

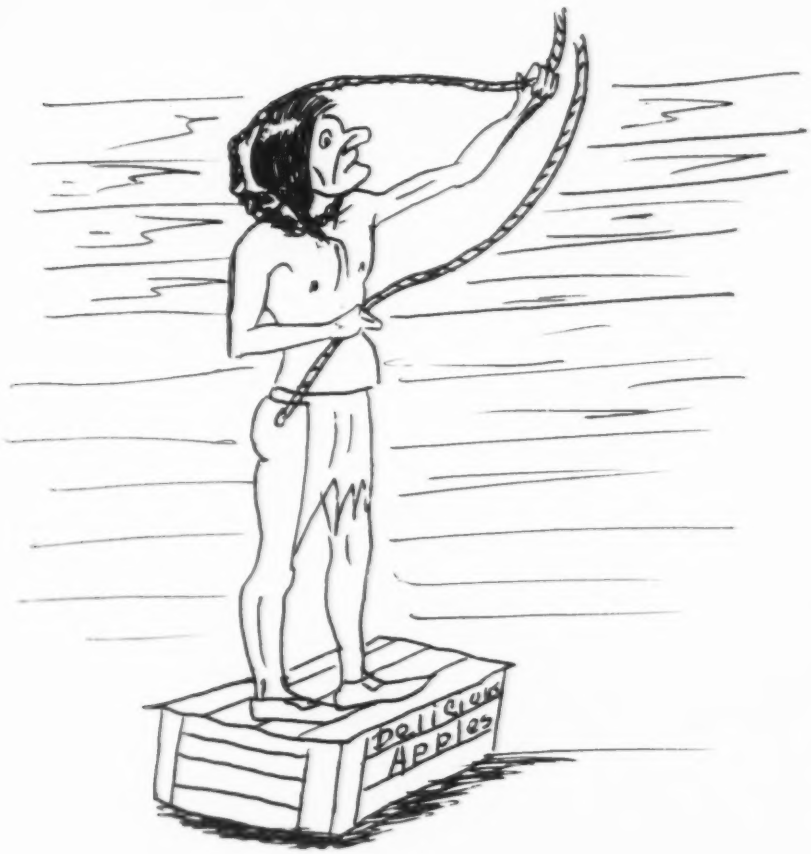
This story is an actual happening. It took place a mile or two from where I was raised. The man's name was Horse's Ghost. He was a good provider for his family. He had a few horses and cows; other than that, he was one heck of a man. He was a very jealous-hearted man, never letting his wife out of his sight. Whenever I saw him and his wife, they reminded me of a pair of ducks. This is because the Indians all called him Green Neck, meaning a male mallard.

The old log house that they were living in sort of had a few leaky places, and the floor was sort of giving away, due to the Indian singing parties that were always being held during the winter months. He decided to have a larger, new house built. The contractor who was building the house was a French half-breed. He wasn't only a log house builder, but was also quite a ladies' man, always cutting a wide swath with the gals, regardless of age, race, color, or creed.

***It wasn't long before the old lady Horse's Ghost was bringing coffee, tea, and snacks to the lady-killing half-breed.***

As one could guess, it wasn't long before Mrs. Horse's Ghost was taking drinking water, a snack, and tea out to the French half-breed. It wasn't too long until Mr. Horse's Ghost got his dander and feathers all ruffled up. Forbidding his wife to go out to the new house or even go near it, he said, "If you do, I will do something that will haunt you for the rest of your life, and you won't want to ever live in the new house. So you had better stay away from that French half-breed and the new house."

It wasn't long until Mr. Horse's Ghost suspected that his warning wasn't heeded. It was on a weekend, and the French half-breed took the weekend off. Mr. Horse's Ghost said to his wife, "You have been carrying on with that French man, I know, so that makes this a good day to die. I will do as I have planned."



He then painted his face red, took a rope and an apple box out to the new house. Tying a make-shift hangman's noose in one end of the rope, and throwing the rope over the center ridge pole, he placed the apple box directly under the rope. As he went through all this foolish rigmarole, he kept glancing over to the house to see if his wife was watching him, which she was. He then stepped up on the apple box and placed the noose around his neck, and started singing a brave man's death song. Suddenly the apple box gave way and shifted out from under him. His braveness all quickly vanished, and he grabbed hold of the rope to keep from choking, and screamed out, "Help me, Old Lady, help me."

She ran out to where the hanging was taking place. When she arrived, she found she couldn't lift her husband high enough so he could free himself from the noose that was now so tight that the old boy was turning blue and gasping for breath.

The only thing she could do was to run back to the old house and get a butcher knife to cut him down. Of course, all this running back and forth took a little time. When she arrived back to the scene of the big hanging, Mr. Horse's Ghost was pretty tired and gasping in a whisper, "Old Lady, help me, help me."

She cut him down. For a moment, he lay on the ground; then he said, "You just took your time getting the knife. You just wanted to see me die."

Then she said, "If you really want to die, then let me do it for you." She picked up a club and started beating all heck out of him, and I mean all heck. He was shielding himself, begging his old lady, "Don't hit me, don't hit me; you're going to hurt me." So they lived happily ever after.

# The Tipi Creeper

The year of 1930, my two brothers and I came up from the Fort Peck Reservation to a rodeo that was being held a short distance south east of the Fort Belknap Indian Agency. There was a large encampment; everyone in those days took great pride in their Celebrations.

"Ol' Soapy" was always there with his hot dog stand. His famous call for attraction was, "They're all ready and red-hot with an onion in the middle and a pickle on top!" Everyone knew Soapy, he was a well-liked man. He fed many a broke cowboy.

Then there was the "Wild Animal Side Show." Fifteen cents would get you in to see the rattlesnake, bobcat, chicken hawk, jack rabbit, and a big black bear. Last, but not least, was a monkey. Of course, there were the HULA HULA dancing girls for a little higher price, 25¢. You could go into the big tent and feast your eyes on the gals as they wiggled like fish caught in a net, and their bellies shook like bowls of jello.

Then there were always the evening pavillion dances, and the Pow-Wows. One of my Cantrell brothers, I won't say which one, had a date with one of the fair maidens of the night. I was over at my uncle's camp in bed when one of my brothers came and borrowed my white cowboy hat; so I let him take it to wear so he could court this fair maiden.

My brother looked through the crowd for her, but couldn't find her. He headed for the tent in which the sleeping beauty would be lying, waiting for her Prince Charming to come Tipi Creeping. He quietly crept up to the tent with a fresh hamburger he had jawboned from Ol' Soapy. He had figured there was a dog laying under the wagon. To keep the growling dog quiet he fed him the hamburger. He quickly made friends with the dog, then proceeded about the tent.

As he crept to the side of the tent, he could hear someone snoring loud enough to wake the dead. Surely that couldn't be the fair maiden? He crept around to the other side and listened a bit. He took off my hat, and then pulled a few tent pins and crawled in up to his waist. He put my hat back on his head and listened real close. Looking down at the beautiful sleeping maiden as she slumbered in a deep dream of peace, her beautiful raven black hair loosely covering the side of her face, he then called her name in a passionate tone of voice. He then brushed her hair aside and kissed her on the cheek, and what do you know! It was the girl's father that he had kissed!!

The old man let out a growl like a mad grizzly bear; he jumped up and landed in the middle of the tent. His legs looked like a pair of ice tongs. All he had on for bed gear was his britch cloth. Out backed my brother.

What?! Yes, leaving my white hat in the tent, then bursting out at a dead run with a pack of dogs at his heels. There was an old horse stocked nearby on a long rope. Just then my brother hit the rope about knee high, and tripped end over teakettles, with the dogs nipping at the seat of his pants.

The next morning at sunrise, the maiden's father, dressed in war togs, his face all painted red, a-straddled on an old pot-gutted, switch-tail mare, jogged slowly about the encampment chanting a war song, holding my white hat high, saying, "Whoever owns this hat, be man enough to come forward and claim it."

I had to come forward and claim it. I had to get my aunt and uncle to prove that I was at their tent in bed, and that I had loaned my hat to one of my brothers. They didn't know which one of them it was. Yes, I got my hat back. Never, no more, will I loan my hat to a Tipi Creeper.

*Story told by: Wallace Cantrell*

# The Story of the Animal with a Tail at Both Ends

A big circus came to Wolf Point. I think it was Barnum and Bailey. It was a Celebration. I was just a young boy then. Not only the kids looked forward to it, but everyone in the community.

Among the crowd was old Digs The Ground. He was taking in all the sights. The day was very hot, and soon Digs The Ground felt the need for a smoke. So he started looking around for shade to sit down in. He sat down in the shade against what he thought was a tent. He then took out his buckskin tobacco pouch and clay pipe, filling it to the rim. He then took out a little tin can filled with kitchen stick matches, took one, and scratched it on the side of his clay pipe and lit up his pipe, puffing away like an old coal-burning locomotive. Suddenly he felt the tent he was leaning against moved, which seemed sort of strange to him (It was an elephant).

He finally finished his smoke and walked a short distance away from what he thought was a tent. He loked back at where he was sitting, only to see a large animal with a tail at both ends. He said, "The animal would wrap its tail around the tall grass, uprooting it and stuffing it in his hind end." He said to himself, "This must be one of the animals that the white man brought over across the big lakes to spread all this bad sickness, to kill off all the Indians, so that the white men could take away our land and rivers."

*Story told by: Wally Cantrell*

The animal with two tails

Called Minerva Allen: She did collecting, editing & she is responsible for everything of this doc. So, no problem. GH 6/27/90

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